

3. GENERAL INFORMATION

3.1 Introduction and Background

This RFP is issued by the Department of Workforce Development, hereafter the Department. The purpose of this RFP is to solicit proposals and select agencies to administer W-2 and related programs in designated geographic areas in Wisconsin.

The W-2 program seeks to provide a broad array of employment and training services to help eligible Wisconsin residents obtain and maintain viable, self-sustaining employment. W-2 accomplishes this goal by providing needed services in a comprehensive fashion; from job readiness motivation to job retention and advancement skill training. W-2 employment and training services are available to any eligible Wisconsin resident unable to sustain employment or advance in the job market; W-2 services are not limited to recipients of cash assistance. The W-2 program will not, however, help those who are unwilling to help themselves. The following eight philosophical principles guide the W-2 program:

1. For those who can work, only work should pay.
2. W-2 assumes everybody is able to work, or if not, at least capable of making a contribution to society through work activity within their abilities.
3. Families are society's way of nurturing and protecting children, and all policies must be judged in light of how well these policies strengthen and support the responsibility of both parents to care for their children.
4. The benchmark for determining the new system's fairness is by comparison with low income families who work for a living, not by comparison with those receiving various government benefit packages.
5. There is no entitlement. The W-2 reward system is designed to reinforce behavior that leads to independence and self-sufficiency.
6. Individuals are part of various communities of people and places. W-2 operates in ways that enhance the way communities support individual efforts to achieve self-sufficiency.
7. The W-2 system provides only as much service as an eligible individual asks for or needs.
8. W-2's objectives are best achieved by working with the most effective providers and by relying on market and performance mechanisms.

The goal of W-2 is to help Wisconsin families reach self-sufficiency through work. When participants are deemed unable to find or keep unsubsidized employment on their own, W-2 provides the needed services to prepare the participant for this ultimate goal.

3.2 Policies for W-2 and Related Programs

The Department's policies for W-2 and Related Programs include, but are not limited to the following:

- W-2 application; eligibility dates and reviews;
- Financial and non-financial eligibility;
- W-2 time limits;
- Case processing requirements; verification, fraud detection and prevention, overpayment recovery, reporting changes, confidentiality;
- Assessments;
- Placements in the W-2 ladder;
- Participant Employability Plans;
- W-2 placements; Unsubsidized Employment, Trial Jobs, Community Service Jobs, W-2 Transitions;
- Custodial Parent of an Infant Payments;
- Education and Training provisions;
- Referral to appropriate service;
- Working with employers;

- W-2 payments and payment reductions;
- Learnfare requirements;
- Job Access Loans requirements;
- Case management for non-custodial parents, pregnant women and minor parents;
- Child care eligibility;
- Child Support referrals;
- Children First (optional);
- Employment Skills Advancement Program;
- Emergency Assistance;
- Food Stamp Employment and Training;
- Transportation assistance;
- Fact Finding/Fair Hearings;
- Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medicaid;
- Community Steering Committees;
- Children's Services Network; and
- Job Center Standards.

3.3 Procuring and Contracting Agency

The Department will be the sole State procuring and contracting agency. The Department is the sole point of contact for the State of Wisconsin during the selection process.

3.4 Eligible Entities to Propose

Entities eligible to propose under this RFP include, but are not limited to:

- Government agencies;
- Private, for profit entities;
- Private, not-for-profit entities; and
- Tribal governing bodies.

See also RFP section 7.1 Program Identification/Organization for additional requirements.

3.5 Prime Proposer

Use of subcontractors is permitted, and consortium arrangements are encouraged. Where a proposal is submitted by more than one agency, one of the agencies must be designated as the prime proposer and the other agencies as subcontractors. If subcontractors are to be used, the proposer must clearly explain their participation.

3.6 Minority Business Subcontractors

The Department is committed to the promotion of minority business in the State's purchasing program. Authority for this program is found in sections 15.107(2), 16.75(4), 16.755 and 540.036 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

The successful agencies will be encouraged to purchase services and supplies from minority businesses certified by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Bureau of Minority Business Development. Details about this program may be found at: <http://www.doa.state.wi.us/dsas/mbe.htm>.

3.7 W-2 Geographic Areas

With the exception of Milwaukee County (which is divided into six (6) regions) and federally recognized American Indian reservations, W-2 geographic areas are established along county boundaries.

3.8. Geographic Areas Open for Competitive Proposals

The Department reserves the authority to withdraw any geographic area or add a geographic area to the competitive RFP process. The geographic areas open for competitive proposals are: Bayfield County; Columbia County; Jackson County; Langlade County; Menominee County; Milwaukee County - Region 4*; and Milwaukee County - Region 5*.

* The Department may withdraw this area from the competitive RFP process.

Appendix C to the RFP identifies the geographic areas where agencies are exercising the Right of First Selection and the geographic areas which are available for proposer agencies to submit competitive proposals. Information will be provided during the procurement process to identify additional (if any) W-2 geographic areas available for competition under this RFP.

3.9 Proposals Covering Multiple Geographic Areas

Prospective proposers may wish to form a consortium of multiple geographic areas for the purpose of submitting a proposal under this RFP. Benefits of operating W-2 and related programs as a consortium may include: having flexibility among and between individual agency allocations; economies of scale; a combined base for determination of performance; enhanced ability to respond to changes in caseloads. Each proposal submitted must conform to the requirements specified in the RFP.

A consortium may be developed under the following circumstance:

- A group of agencies, all of which are from W-2 geographic areas that are either open for competition, or for which the agency is relinquishing its Right of First Selection and which are all in the Workforce Development Areas covered by the same Department Contract Manager (see Appendix D to the RFP). One agency in the consortium must be designated as the lead agency for the consortium with whom the Department will contract on behalf of other agencies in the consortium.

3.10 Job Centers

The W-2 program will be operated within the Job Center system. There are several models for operation, ranging from full co-location of W-2 services at the Job Center to being linked electronically within a Job Center network, with the preference to integrate W-2 services into the Job Center system as much as possible. As a partner in the Job Center, the W-2 agency may share in reasonable and allowable costs, which are allocated in accordance with the W-2 cost allocation plan submitted to DWS. For example, W-2 agencies may provide receptionist and resource area staffing and other financial support to Job Centers.

The W-2 agency's service delivery must be the same or similar to Model A or Model B service delivery as described in Appendix G to the RFP unless the Department approves the agency's justification as to why Models A or B are not viable and an alternative that is mutually agreeable to the Department and the proposer agency is established as part of the RFP process.

Job Centers represent a single point of delivery where both job seekers and employers are able to receive quick and easy access to a wide range of employment services. An individual walking into a Job Center will access a receptionist for guidance to the appropriate services. In addition, a resource specialist will be available to help people determine what type of assistance will be most useful.

Job Centers offer an extensive array of services, including information about jobs, careers, and the area labor market, as well as access to training programs, testing, and assessment of individual job seeker skills and interests, job referrals, job search assistance, and job opportunities.

All Job Centers offer the following "core services":

- a computerized listing of job openings, on-site or through access to JobNet on the Internet;
- the ability for employers to input job listings electronically;
- assistance with job search skills; testing and assessment;
- information on education and training programs; and,
- automated links to the unemployment insurance system.

Job Centers are the focal point for employers and job seekers wishing to become part of the world class workforce in Wisconsin.

Job Center Standards apply to all of the partners in a Job Center.

3.11 RFP Amendment

The terms and conditions contained in this RFP document constitute the basis for this procurement and any resulting contract negotiated between the W-2 agency and the Department.

The Department reserves the right to modify, at its sole discretion, this RFP at any time prior to the proposal due date by issuing written addenda. This includes, but is not limited to, revisions, addenda, additions, clarifications, and/or deletions.

(The Department will send all modifications to all proposer Agencies that submit a timely Request to Remain on Mailing List. At its option, the Department may issue modifications by mail, e-mail, fax or any combination of the three. In the event of a discrepancy between the versions of the same modification, the hard copy on file with the Department shall prevail.)